| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vendler's Situation Types in Different Languages: A Cross-Linguistic Study

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| ABSTRACT

Aiming at offering increasingly more evidence for Vendler's renowned situation types and proving the similarity among world languages, the essay begins by delivering an overview of situation types put forward by Vendler in Verbs and Times. Next, cross-linguistic language facts, including English, Chinese, French, Korean, Icelandic, and Turkish, to name a few, are collected to provide proofs and analyses for the theory. To conclude, the selected evidences are likely to account for the similarity among those languages to some degree and the effectiveness of Vendler's situations types.

1. Introduction

The way of properly classifying verb types has been a preoccupation for many researchers in this field. Therefore, Vendler, in 1957 put forward a new way to categorize the language. The present essay is to give an overview of his theory and to, provide more evidence for it and to observe the situation types encoded in different languages.

2. Overview of situation types

Vendler put forward his views on situation types in his paper *Verbs and Times* in 1957. To begin with, Vendler (1957) pointed out that many researchers had attempted to classify different verbs. However, it was inevitable to leave some gaps to be solved. Therefore, he suggests that the time schemata presupposed by many verbs should be the centre of the focus, which may be considered as the way to make a clear distinction. Besides, it is helpful for facilitating the establishment of measure.

Hence, given a few widely applied schemata in English, Vendler (1957) emphasized that the initial task was to set a range and to describe the most common time schemata among English verbs. Then, he began from the generally acknowledged difference between two types of verbs, verbs with continuous tenses and verbs without them. In doing so, he posed two questions and cited the common answers to questions in order to guide readers to reflect on such verbs by saying "What are you doing?" and "Do you know . . .?". Then he suggested the difference and implied that verbs, such as "running" and "writing" are processes going on in time, and they include successive phases following one another in time. Whereas, despite the truth of a subject who knows something in a certain period, knowing and its kin are, by contrast, not processes going on in time. Afterwards, by way of giving examples of "pushing a cart" and "writing a letter", he summarized two types of verbs, *activity terms* for the former and *accomplish terms* for the latter. Those two terms accounted for the exhibition of "time schemata" of verbs. Subsequently, by giving examples of "reaching the top" and "loving", accompanied by questions, such as "At what time did you reach the top?" and "For how long did you love her?", he summarized another two types of verbs, *achievement terms* for the former and *state terms* for the latter.

Next, he summarized the illustration as follows:

For activities: "*A* was running at time *t*", means that time instant *t* is on *a* time stretch throughout which *A* was running. For accomplishments: "*A* was drawing *a* circle at *t*" means that *t* is on *the* time stretch in which *A* drew that circle. For achievements: "*A* won a race between *t₁* and *t₂*" means that *the* time instant at which *A* won that race is between *t₁* and *t₂*. For states: "*A* loved somebody from *t₁* to *t₂*" means that at *any* instant between *t₁* and *t₂* *A* loved that person. (Vendler 1957:149)

With respect to the last part of his paper, in order to account for different types clearly, Vendler (1957) cited some verbs used in different contexts, such as "see", "think" and "believe", to prove that a verb can be classified into different situations types in accordance to the context and temporal schemata. Meanwhile, he further categorized state terms into generic states, such as "thinking that", and specific states, such as "thinking about".

However, most importantly, Vendler (1957) explained the application of his method in detail by listing a set of representative verbs or expressions to provide more evidence for the classification of situation types in Table 2-1, as follows (1957:150):

Examples for four types of situations

Types of situations	Examples
Activities	running, walking, swimming, pushing, pulling something
Accomplishments	painting a picture, making a chair, building a house, writing or reading a novel, delivering a sermon, giving or attending a class, playing a game of chess, growing up, recovering from illness, getting ready for something
Achievements	recognizing, realizing, spotting and identifying something, losing or finding an object, reaching the summit, winning the race, crossing the border, starting, stopping, and resuming something, being born or dying
States	having, possessing, desiring, wanting something, liking, disliking, loving, hating, ruling, dominating somebody or something, knowing or believing things

Additionally, according to Saeed (2009:124-125), on the basis of Vendler's system and for the purpose of clarifying the notion of achievements, C. S. Smith (1991:28) added another situation type, semelfactive, and illustrated it as instantaneous atelic events, such as "knock" and "cough". Whereas achievements are considered as instantaneous changes of states as a result of a new state, such as "reach the top" and "win a race". Besides, she further classified five situation types by using a set of semantic features: [stative], [telic] and [duration], as follows (1991: 30):

Classifications of five types of situations

Situations	Static	Durative	Telic
States	[+]	[+]	n.a.
Activities	[−]	[+]	[−]
Accomplishments	[−]	[+]	[+]
Semelfactive	[−]	[−]	[−]
Achievements	[−]	[−]	[+]

Given that the categorization of Vendler has been the most influential, the four-fold situation types put forward by Vendler are to be adopted in this essay. The essay aims to collect as many cross-linguistic data as possible and provide increasingly more evidence for Vendler's classification of four situation types.

3. Cross-linguistic analyses of situation types
In this section, various language facts are selected from books or other articles to account for how situation types, such as states, activities, accomplishments and achievements, are encoded in different languages.

3.1 States
States belong to a type of situation which does not have a natural ending point. To put it in another way, States are atelic. In addition, states involve time instants in an indefinite and non-unique sense (Vendler 1957:149).

Take English sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "own", "live", "be", "stood", "eat", "love" and "like", can be classified into states from sentence (1) - (7) in that these verbs are durative and atelic. For sentence (1), even if Sam went travelling to another city

without peach orchards, he was still the owner of his three peach orchards. For sentence (2), though Mary might not live in New Orleans now, she once lived in that place. Hence, the action "live in New Orleans" is atelic without a unique sense. For sentence (3), the process for Bill is that in the past, he was not satisfied with something. It describes his anger in the past and his anger lasted in the past. For sentence (4), it describes the place of the caravan. From the sentence, it is known that the caravan is still in its initial place, no matter when it is, despite the fact that the sentence is uttered and it mentions the time when the viewer saw the caravan in the old place. For sentence (5), the verb "eat" here can be regarded as a stative term because it describes the habit of Mary, that is to say, Mary has a habit of eating Japanese food. For sentence (6), "love" belongs to states in that it shows no telicity for ending the affection for semantics and it involves an indefinite sense. For sentence (7), "like" describes the state of the subject "he" to present that his hobby is to spend time with cats. It is also atelic and even cats are not with him right now, he still enjoys playing with them.

(1) Sam owned three peach orchards.
(2) Mary lived in New Orleans.
(3) Bill was angry. (Smith 1997:170)
(4) At seven o'clock, the caravan stood in its old place.
(5) Mary eats Japanese food. (Kawamura 1994:14-15)
(6) I love semantics.
(7) He likes playing with cats.

Take some Chinese sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "*ai* (love)", "*hen* (hate)", "*xihuan* (like)" and "*gaoxing* (happy)", are classified into states from sentence (8) to (11). For sentence (8), "*ai*" refers to the appreciation for linguistics as an atelic event. For sentence (9), "*hen*" describes the dissatisfaction of rainy days for the subject "she", and the dissatisfaction is her own habit. For sentence (10), "*xihuan*" shows the preference of the subject and the preference can also be an atelic event. For sentence (11), though "*gaoxing*" is translated as "happy" in English, it can be used as a verb in Mandarin Chinese. It describes the state of the speaker. Although the subject is "*jintian*" on the surface, it is used as an adverbial of time in the sentence. It shows that the speaker's mood is good in any periods of time today.

(8) Wo ai yuyanxue.
'I love linguistics'.
(9) Ta hen yutian.
'She hates rainy days'.
(10) Ta xihuan dushu.
'He likes reading books'.
(11) Jintian zhen gaoxing.
Today Real Happy.
'It's happy today'.

Take some French sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "*être* (be)" and "*savoir* (know)", are classified into states from sentence (12) to (13). For sentence (12), "*être*" serves as a connection between Marie and sick. It embodies the health state of Marie in the past. Therefore, Marie was not in good health in the past. For sentence (13), "*savoir*" indicates his language ability as well as the number of languages he knows.

(12) Marie était malade.
'Marie was sick.' (Smith 1997:194)
(13) Il sait parler beaucoup de langues.
He knows to speak many languages.
'He speaks many languages.'

Take a Korean sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*yel-ta* (open)", are classified into states from sentence (14). For sentence (14), "*yel-ta* (open)" is combined by another component "*e twu*" so as to generate a state and to describe that the window is open because of John.
(14) John-i changmwun-ul yel-e twu-ess-ta.
John-Nom window-Acc open-A-T-S
'John kept the window open.' (Lee 2003:3)

Take an Icelandic sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*skilja* (understand)", are classified into states from sentence (15). For sentence (15), "*skilja* (understand)" is used to describe the state that the speaker does not figure out what the case really is.

(15) Úff, ég er ekki að skilja þetta mál.
Phew I am not to understand this case.
'Phew, I am not understanding this case.' (Jóhannsdóttir 2011:43)

3.2 Activities

Activities denote types of situation which, identical to states, does not require a natural ending point. That is to say, activities are also atelic. Besides, activities involve a period of indefinite time and accept the progressive (Vendler 1957:149).

Take English sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "swim", "sing", "play", "eat", "grow", "draw" and "observe", can be classified into activities from sentence (16) - (23) in that these verbs are atelic and can be used in progressive tense. For sentence (16), the verb "swim" happened in the past. However, it is hard to know when it started and finished. The verb "swim" in simple past tense is able to happen at any time in the past. For sentence (17), the verb "sing" is not telic because it is merely an action of uttering some musical notes without clarifying its natural ending point. In addition, it is used in the progressive, that is to say, the action "sing" lasts at present. For sentence (18), the verb "play" is used to collocate with golf. Golf cannot help the verb "play" to suggest an ending time. The action of "play golf" lasted in the past since the sentence is in past tense. Besides, it shows that she was keep playing golf in the past. For sentence (19), "eat" is used in present continuous tense, which refers to the action of chewing and digesting. It is not acknowledged what the speaker is eating, which is solely a description of the action. Hence, the natural ending point of the action is unknown, so the action becomes atelic. For sentence (21), the verb "grow" is used to describe the generation of the plant. It is proper to say "The plant is growing for an hour" rather than "The plant is growing in an hour" in that "grow" has no natural ending point. If the plant finished growing, that means the end of life and the start of death. Nevertheless, it is illogical to put an end to the growth of anything, that is to say, the end of grow means death. Besides, "in an hour" refers to how much time is taken and used to finish, which does not apply for the description of activities. For sentence (22), the verb "draw" is used to describe the action of creating a picture. Nevertheless, picture does not appear as the object or argument of the verb or predicate "draw". Therefore, it is merely an act of drawing without telicity. For sentence (23), the verb "observe" is used to describe the action of looking carefully at sky. Although the verb "observe" cannot be activity in some circumstances, such as "observe a fish", in this sentence, "observe" is collocated with "the sky". It is acknowledged that sky cannot be eliminated no matter it is sunny or rainy. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that "observe" is likely to be atelic and durative for an indefinite time.
(16) Lily swam in the pond. (Smith 1997:170)
(17) He is singing. (Recanati & Recanati 1999:169)
(18) She was playing golf. (Jóhannsdóttir 2011:11)
(19) I am eating.
(20) They are watching a movie.
(21) The plant is growing.
(22) He is drawing.
(23) They are observing the sky.

Take Chinese sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "*chao-le yi-jia* (quarrel)", "*zou* (walk)", "*pao* (run)", "*shouhou* (wait)", "*ku* (cry)", "*guzhang* (clap)" and "*yaotou* (shaking head)", can be classified into activities from sentence (24) - (29) in that these verbs are atelic and can be used in progressive tense. For sentence (24), the verb "*chao-le yi-jia* (quarrel)" describes a quarrel in the past without knowing its exact time of happening and ending. For sentence (25), verbs "*zou* (walk)" and "*pao* (run)" are durative but atelic in that the natural ending point cannot be found in the sentence. Therefore, it is likely that these two actions are likely to continue. For sentence (26), the verb "*shouhou* (wait)" is deployed to describe an action of waiting. Nevertheless, it is not clear what is waiting so that the natural ending point is also ambiguous. Hence, the action of waiting lasts "for one day" according to the sentence, that is to say, the speaker may wait for one day, but one day may not be the ending point because it may be one period of time in all of the time taken for waiting. For sentence (27), the verb "*ku*" is combined by an adverbial of time "*yizhi*" and an aspect marker "*zai*" so that it can represent an atelic activity since no one knows when the subject of crying will stop. For sentence (28), the verb "*guzhang*" is also accompanied by "*zai*" to indicate an atelic activity. The action may last for a long time. For sentence (29), the verb "*yaotou*" is collocated with an aspect marker "*Zhe*". They refer to the atelic, durative and progressive action of shaking the head.
(24) Tamen zuotian zai gongyan chao-le yi-jia.
They yesterday in park quarrel-LE one fight.
'They quarreled yesterday in the park.' (Smith 1997:264)
(25) Tamen bianzou bianpao.
They walk run.
'They are walking and running.'
(26) Shouhou yi-tian
wait one day

'to wait for one day'
(27) Ta yizhi ZAI ku
   He all the time Zai cry
'He was crying all of the time'
(28) Zai guzhang
   Zai clap hands
'be clapping one hands'
(29) Yao-Zhe tou tanxi
   Shake-Zhe head sigh
'sighed while shaking her head' (Xiao & McEnery 2004:339-340)

Take a French sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*travailler* (work)", can be classified into activities from sentence (30). For sentence (30), "*travailler*" is used in *Passé Composé*, a past tense in French. Though sometimes this tense refers to the accomplish of something, here "*travailler*" is conjugated in this tense to be used as a durative action. Despite the time "10 hours", it is only part of hours that she spent in working.
(30) Elle a travaillé dix heures ce jour-là.
She worked ten hours that day. (Smith 1997:194)

Take a Turkish sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*dön* (turn)", can be classified into activities from sentence (31). For sentence (31), "*dön* (turn)" is used in past tense. The action of turning is durative and atelic no matter what adjective is employed.
(31) Dansçı hızla/yavaş yavaş/bile bile dön-dü.
'The dancer turned quickly/slowly/intentionally.' (Güven 2012:187)

Take a Korean sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*tallita* (run)", can be classified into activities from sentence (32). For sentence (32), "*tallita* (run)" is collocated with "*-ko iss-*" to indicate a progressive or durative action. In addition, the natural ending point is also not clear in this sentence. It should be notice that the "*-ko iss-*" in Korean is similar to "*-te i-*" in Japanese (Ryu, Horie & Shirai 2010:679), such as sentence (33). That is to say, in Korean and Japanese, the morphological and syntactic change of a verb is likely to result in the development of activities.
(32) Ku-ka talli-ko iss-ta he-Nom run-Prog-Dec
'He is running,' (Ryu, Horie & Shirai 2010:678)
(33) Ano hito-wa tabe-te i-ru.
That person-Topic eat-Prog-Dec
That man is eating.

3.3 Accomplishments
Accomplishments refers to a type of situation which require a natural ending point, that is to say, accomplishments are telic. Besides, activities involve a period of definite time. It also accepts the progressive (Vendler 1957:149). It should be notice that the apparent distinction between activities and accomplishments lie in telicity. Activities, as elaborated in previous section, are atelic, but accomplishments, on the contrary, are telic.

Take English sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "write a letter", "sing a song", "wait for the bus", can be classified into accomplishments from sentence (34) - (36). For sentence (34), the verb "write a letter" is inflected into the simple past tense. According to the argument or object of the predicate or verb "write", the "letter" can be finished in a definite period of time. Therefore, the action of "writing a letter" should be telic because of the natural ending time. Besides, it can also be asked by the question "How long does it take for Mrs. Ramsey to write a letter?" Likewise, answers, such as "She spent 1 hours finishing a letter" or "She wrote the letter in 30 minutes", are also possible. It is because "in a certain hour/minute" implies that something has been finished. For sentence (35), the verb "sing a song" also indicates a natural ending point, that is, when the last word of the lyric is pronounced, the song will finish, so does the action of singing a song. For sentence (36), the verb "wait for the bus" is telic because the action has got to put an end when the speaker's bus arrives.

(34) Mrs. Ramsey wrote a letter. (Smith 1997:170)
(35) He sang a song.
(36) I waited for the bus.

Take Chinese sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "*zhu-le santian* (lived for three days)" and "*xie-le yifeng xin* (wrote a letter)" from sentence (37) - (38). For sentence (37), the verb "*zhu-le santian* (lived for three days)" describes a person who remains in a place for three days. The action implies a natural ending point. For sentence (38), the verb "*xie-le yifeng xin* (wrote a letter)" is

similar to the English counterpart "wrote a letter". However, compared to English, Chinese is not abundant in morphological change of verbs. However, Chinese will use the marker "*le*" to indicate the past.

(37) Ta zai beijing zhu-le santian.
He in Beijing live-Le three day.
'He lived in Beijing for three days.' (Fang 2015:60)
(38) Wo zuotian xie -Le yifeng xin.
I yesterday write-LE oneCL letter.
'I wrote a letter yesterday.' (Smith 1997:264)

Take French sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "*s'asseoir* (sit)" and "*manger une pomme* (Kadri 2006) (eat an apple)", can be classified into accomplishments from sentence (39) and (40). For sentence (39), *s'asseoir* (sit) is a pronominal verb. The telicity is also clear in this sentence. He can only sit in a few seconds and after getting seated, the ending point draws near. For sentence (40), the verb "*manger*" is again conjugated into the past tense. However, the object of "*manger*" is "*une pomme* (an apple)" so that when the apple is finished, the action also calls an end.

(39) Il s'est assis à son bureau.
'He sat down at his desk.' (Smith 1997:194)
(40) Patrick a mangé une pomme en une minute.
'Patrick ate an apple in one minute.'

Take a Turkish sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*yürü* (walk)", can be classified into accomplishments from sentence (41). For sentence (41), "*yürü* (walk)" is collocated with "*park-a* (park-DAT). Therefore, when Ali walked to the park, the action of walking will put an end. Thus, *yürü* (walk) is also telic.
(41) Ali park-a yürü!
Ali-NOM park-DAT walk-IMP-2sg
'Ali, walk to the park' (Güven 2012:189)

Take a Korean sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*nohta* (put)", can be classified into accomplishment from sentence (42). For sentence (42), "*nohta* (put)" is inflected into the past tense and is collocated with "*tali* (bridge)" to imply a telic action. Therefore, when the bridge is built up, the action will draw a period.
(42) Tali-lul noh-ass-ta.
bridge-Acc put-T-S
'They built a bridge.' (Lee 2003:15)

Take a Swedish sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*sjong* (sang)", can be classified into accomplishment from sentence (43). For sentence (43), "*sjong* (sang)" is collocated with "*man nationalsangen* (the national anthem)" so that when they finished the song, the action ends.
(43) Sedan sjong man nationalsangen.
'Then they sang the national anthem.' (Zielonka 2004:173)

Take a Paraguayan Guaraní sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*japó* (make)", can be classified into accomplishment from sentence (44). For sentence (44), "*japó* (make)" is collocated with "*ra' anga* (the figure)". It denotes a telic action because after making the figure, it means the end of situation, though it also takes time to make it.
(44) Nde-ovecha ra' ý-pe a-japó-ta peteĩ juru joko-ha ra' anga.
B2sg-sheep child-at A1sg-make-PROSP one mouth hold-NOM figure
'I will draw you a muzzle for your sheep.' (Tonhauser 2011:286)

Take an Oḍia sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*paḍh* (read)", can be classified into accomplishments from sentence (45). For sentence (45), "*paḍh* (read)" is collocated with "*bahi* (book)". It presents a telic action. Besides, from the sentence, it could be observed that verbs in Oḍia are added with many morphemes to represent its tense and aspect.
(45) ra:ju bahi-ṭa: paḍh   -i   -sa:r   -i   -(a)ch -ø   -i
Raju   book-class   read   -vl   -inish -vl   -cop   -pres   -agr
'Raju   has   completed/finished   reading the   book.' (Mahapatra 2015:25)

Take a Bulgarian sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*изяждам/изям izyazhdam/izyam* (eat up)", can be classified into accomplishments from sentence (46). For sentence (46), "*изяждам/изям izyazhdam/izyam* (eat up)" becomes telic because of the pizza. When the whole object is consumed, the action is completed.

(46) Той изяде пицата за десет минути.

Toj izjade pitsata za deset minuti.

he eat.up.Aor.3Sg pizza.the PREP ten minute. Pl

'He ate the pizza in ten minutes.' (Rangelov 2017:4)

3.4 Achievements
Achievements is a type of situation which requires a telic and definite time. It is likely to be strange by using the progressive. Although achievements and accomplishments share the similar characteristic - telicity, they are not identical in that achievement requires specific and unique time instants (Vendler 1957:149).

Take English sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "reach the lighthouse" and "find the key", can be classified into achievements from sentence (47) - (48). For sentence (47), the verb "reach a house" is in simple past tense. First, "reach a house" is a telic action, because when one reaches a house, the action will stop. Second, "reach a house" requires a specific time instant, that is to say, it is inappropriate to say "I reached a house for an hour." Rather than stating the exact time of reaching the house, it actually illustrates the time used on the way to reach the house. Therefore, only a unique time is tailored to achievements. Therefore, it is also proper to say "My Ramsey reached the lighthouse at 8." For sentence (48), the verb "found the key" indicates the action of seeking for the key. The unique time instant is provided in the sentence, that is, "at 10 o'clock".

(47) Mr. Ramsey reached the lighthouse. (Smith 1997:170)

(48) Finally, I found my key at 10 o'clock.

Take Chinese sentences as examples. Verbs, such as "*dasi* (kill)" and "*daole shanding* (reached the top)" from sentence (49) - (50). For sentence (49), the verb "*dasi* (kill)" is used to say kill someone. Because of being killed, the action also puts an end. Besides, killing someone means to make other people lose their life in a certain time instant. Therefore, with respect to the time instant, it also conforms to the criteria of achievements. For sentence (50), the verb "*daole shanding* (reached the top)" is similar to the English counterpart "reach the top". Therefore, the verb abides by the criteria of being a telic action as well as having a unique time instant.

(49) Ta dasi-Le John

he hit-die-ASP John

'He killed John by hitting him.' (Shih 2006:79)

(50) Zhangsan zai zhongwu dao-Le shanding.

John at noon arrive-LE hilltop.

'John reached the top at noon.' (Smith 1997:264)

Take a French sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*éclater* (break out)", can be classified into achievements from sentence (51). For sentence (51), "*éclater* (break out)" is conjugated into the past tense. It meets the criteria of having a natural ending point and owning a unique time instant so that the war broke up at a certain point in the past and when it broke up, it signified the start of a war. However, the verb "*éclater* (break out)" itself finished.

(51) La guerre a éclaté.

The war broke out. (Smith 1997:194)

Take a Turkish sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*ulaş* (reach)", can be classified into achievements from sentence (52). For sentence (52), "*ulaş* (reach)" matches with "*tepe-ye*" so that when Ali reached the top, the action put an end at a unique time instant.

(52) Ali tepe-ye ulaş!

Ali-NOM top-DAT reach-IMP-2sg

'Ali, reach the top!' (Güven 2012:188)

Take a Korean sentence as an example. Verbs, such as "*palkjən-hata* (find)", can be classified into achievements from sentence (53). For sentence (53), "*palkjən-hata* (find)" is in past tense and matches with "*hækjəlchæk* (solution)". Hence, the action finished at the moment the solution has been put forward and found. The verb "*palkjən-hata* (find)" is a telic action with a specific time instant.

(52) Minsu-nɨn han sikan an-e hækjəlchæk-ɨl palkjən-ha-jəs'-ta

Minsu-TOP one hour in-PLACE solution-ACC find-do-PAST-PARTICLE

'Minsu found a solution within one hour.' (Lee 1982:578)

4. Conclusion

Considering the given language facts in the essay, it is safe to conclude that Vendler's four-fold verb classification is effective in many languages, to put it in another way, the situation types reflect the similarity among languages in the world. The essay merely explores part of the evidence to prove the effectiveness of Vendler's situation types. More proofs are required if the aim is to discover a broader similarity of world languages.

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